EVALUATING EMPLOYEE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The problem identified for research was that the employee appraisal system currently used by the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management had not been evaluated for effectiveness and content since it was initiated in 1993.

The purpose of this applied research project was to review, compare, and evaluate the content of the current employee appraisal system being utilized by the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management with those used by other agencies. This review included the overall effectiveness of the appraisal and evaluation system used to rate employee performance.

This study utilized a descriptive research methodology. The research questions to be answered were:

1.   What are the performance appraisal systems currently being used by other fire departments?

2.   What standards are used in these appraisal systems to evaluate fire department personnel?

3.   Do other fire departments use a merit pay system in conjunction with their appraisal system and is it successful in motivating employees to perform at their highest level?

4.   Is there a better overall employee appraisal system being used by other fire department agencies to evaluate and motivate the employee to perform at their highest level than the one being used by the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management?

The procedures used to conduct this research project included a literature review of all pertinent information from both the public and private sectors concerning employee appraisals. A survey was sent out to area fire departments asking questions about the appraisal systems that these agencies were using. An informal survey was conducted with department employees concerning their views and opinions on Oviedo's appraisal system.

The research results indicated that conducting employee appraisals are a necessary management tool that benefits both the organization and the employee. The research also showed that most of the departments surveyed are using similar categories, standards, and methods as Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management to evaluate employee performance. The research results did not indicate a better appraisal system than what is currently being used. The results did point out that the standards may have been written too high for an employee to achieve the highest rating.

The recommendations of the research project were that the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management continue to administer the current employee appraisal system. It was recommended that the level of the standards be reviewed and changes made to allow the employee the chance to achieve a high score when their performance dictates. A periodic review of Oviedo's appraisal system should be conducted. This should include a comparison with both the private and public sector to ensure the system is working.

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management currently uses an annual employee appraisal system (Appendix A) together with merit pay to evaluate and reward employee performance. The problem chosen for research was that the employee appraisal system currently being used had not been evaluated for effectiveness and content since it was initiated in 1993. The current system of evaluating employee performance was developed by a private company with some employee participation. Each year during the evaluation period there are comments and concerns stated by department personnel concerning the effectiveness of this system.

The purpose of this research paper was to review, compare, and evaluate the content of the current employee appraisal system being utilized by the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management with those of other fire department agencies. This review included the overall effectiveness of the appraisal and evaluation system used to rate employee performance.

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BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Because of the individualism that is highly present in American culture, efforts to
promote greater accountability and efficiency in government have led many public
administration practitioners to explore the area of performance appraisal as a potentially
important management tool (Hays, Kearney, 1995). The use of an employee appraisal
system has been used in both the private and public sector for many years. In 1993, the
City of Oviedo hired a private firm to review the employee performance evaluation system
that was being used at that time (Appendix B).

The evaluation system used prior to 1993 consisted of several categories and
rating sections to evaluate the employee on performance. These categories included
unsatisfactory, needs improvement, meets expectations, exceeds expectations, and clearly
outstanding. The appraisals were conducted annually on the employee's anniversary date.
 If the employees's performance at least met the "meets expectation" level or was higher
(i.e., "exceeds expectations" or "clearly outstanding"), the employee was given a 2 1/2%
pay increase. It was very unusual for an employee to be denied the 2 1/2% increase.
Because of this there was little relationship between employee performance and
compensation increases. This along with the fact that the City's annual payroll was

increasing 5%-6% yearly regardless of employee productivity led the city to evaluate other methods of employee appraisal systems.

It was the recommendation of the private firm that the City of Oviedo implement a revised performance evaluation system. This system would relate pay increases to employee job performance. It was further recommended that the design of the revised system include four major components. These components were as follows:

1. The performance evaluations should be job related.

2. The City of Oviedo should provide for different levels of increases based upon performance and productivity.

3. Outstanding performance should be rewarded.

4. Employees should be involved in the process.

The first component would require that the city would no longer be limited to the two types of forms being used, the supervisory and non-supervisory personnel forms. Employees were grouped based upon their job assignments and the type of work that was performed. This pertained to both the supervisory and non-supervisory personnel.

The second and third components were needed to motivate employees to excel. Employees were required to demonstrate efforts and results of their work in order to receive a salary increase based upon performance. Employees that performed at a higher or at the highest level would be rewarded at a higher level.

The fourth component was needed in order to get the employees to support the new system. The nature of performance appraisal systems precludes total objectivity. Some employees may have become distrustful of the appraisal system. This made it important to

get the employees involved with the hopes of increasing their confidence and support of the employee appraisal system. Employees were involved in the development and administration of the system thus increasing their support.

The employees assisted in setting the elements for their job positions. Input was requested as to what each employee considered to be the requirement of their position. After this data was received, analyzed, and verified the elements for each job position and category were established. These elements were written as the average or "meets standard" level.

The goal of the new employee appraisal system was to both benefit the City and the employee. The City would lower its payroll by no longer giving every employee the same raise. The City would also realize increased productivity and reduced costs. Employee morale would be enhanced and the more productive employees would have a chance to be rewarded for their efforts and hard work.

Over the years since the new employee appraisal system has been implemented, there have been several areas of concern to the employees. While establishing the job criteria during the employee participation phase, many employees listed every task that they completed. By doing so, this became the norm or the "meets expectation" level. The employees became concerned that it would be impossible to achieve a rating higher than "meets expectations" in most categories due to the already high level established in the appraisal categories. Employees also expressed concerns that the evaluation categories could be more job specific and easier to measure performance without any personal bias by the evaluator.

The problem perceived in the organization was that employees were no longer meeting one of the goals of the appraisal system, motivating employees. The intent of this research project was to review not only the department's appraisal system for employees but those appraisal systems of other fire departments as well. The findings could reveal that no better system exists or that the current system is functioning at an acceptable level. The findings of the research may reveal that some changes should be made to the current employee appraisal system. Either way, it is the intent to use the research and the findings to improve the acceptance and approval of the appraisal system by the employee which indeed would benefit the organization as a whole. After the research was conducted, any recommendations of change would be passed on the Fire Chief for possible further review by the City.

The research problem relates to the subject matter covered in the Executive Development class in the following way. If the organization is to be successful, the employees must be treated fairly. This includes providing a proper method of awarding employees for their hard work as well as their work that is above the "meets standard" level. The problem of providing effective employee appraisal systems relates to the Executive Development class in the areas of team building, motivation, and employee relations. All of these areas were discussed during the course.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Evaluations and Appraisals

Evaluations are an important part of an employer's efforts to help employees fully develop their work potential (Walsh, 1995). The evaluation process establishes

benchmarks that are used to measure performance and to provide valuable feedback for both the employer and the employee. The performance appraisal is the process of communicating work expectations, evaluating employee performance, and encouraging improvements in the employee's performance (Tompkins, 1995).

When evaluations or appraisals are done correctly, they can provide a wide range of benefits to the organization. The results can be used to determine training needs, identify candidates for promotion, and reward employees with merit pay. The feedback that is given to employees can help to improve their productivity and motivation. Even with the benefits of the evaluation, they are looked down upon by some employees and supervisors. Employees often doubt the appraisal's accuracy and often feel they may be too opinionated while supervisors view them as unpleasant and burdensome (Tompkins, 1995).

Purposes of Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals are management tools that may be used to direct and control employee behavior, distribute organizational rewards, improve employee work performance, or develop employee capabilities (Tompkins, 1995). The design and use of the appraisal varies according to which purpose they are intended to meet.

An appraisal properly used can help to direct and control employee behavior. The measurement criteria and the performance standards that are contained in appraisal systems direct the attention of the employee to what exactly is to be completed and how it is to be done. Appraisals can also be used to control employees since job retention, promotions, and bonuses or merit pay often are based upon performance ratings.

Organizations who use appraisals for this purpose are more concerned with employees submitting to their authority than encouraging employees to develop and grow.

Performance appraisals can provide the data that may be needed to make administrative decisions. These decisions may include promotion, transfer, bonuses, or discipline. The supervisors are required to compare employees with each other and assign an overall performance score to each. No counseling sessions or employee participation is needed to accomplish this purpose.

Performance appraisals can be used to improve employee work performance. This can be accomplished by clearly stating work expectations, identifying work deficiencies, and determining how to improve future employee performance. It may be determined that some employees need more training in certain areas while showing that others lack motivation. Coaching and counseling employees, goal setting, and rewards are methods that may be used to improve work performance and motivation.

The appraisal interview can provide an opportunity to encourage employees to develop their capabilities. Improving employee capabilities will allow an organization to keep highly trained and motivated employees on hand to meet the ever changing needs of the organization. To achieve this, the employee is encouraged during the interview to seek out educational opportunities and professional development that is beyond their current job duties.

Types of Performance Appraisals

Formal systems of performance appraisals were developed to bring order to the

process and thus reducing employee complaints about lack of fairness (Boone, Kurtz, 1992). Fairness is important since many times raises and promotions may be determined based upon appraisals. There are a number of appraisal formats that exist which may help to achieve equal treatment and fairness. These are described below.

Graphic rating scales are performance appraisal techniques in which a set of performance factors are rated on an increment scale. Forced distribution scales are techniques used in performance appraisals that use incremental scales and require a predetermined percentage of persons to be included in each category. Behaviorally anchored rating scales use performance factors that are specified and each is then rated on an incremental scale that is divided into increments of observable job behavior. Management by objectives is another widely used evaluation technique. This procedure involves agreement by both supervisor and employee on the employee's objectives for the upcoming evaluation period. The employee is graded at the end of the period on their performance in meeting the agreed upon objectives.

Requirements of Effective Appraisal Systems

Wayne Cascio stated: "Legally and scientifically, the key requirements of any appraisal system are relevance, sensitivity, and reliability. In the context of ongoing operations, the key requirements are acceptability and practicality" (Cascio, 1995, p. 277). Relevance requires that there are clear links between the performance standards for a particular job and the organization's goals. There must also be clear links between the critical job elements identified through a job analysis and the dimensions to be rated on the appraisal form. Cascio said: "Relevance also implies the periodic maintenance and

updating of job analysis, performance standards, and appraisal systems" (Cascio, 1995, p. 277).

Sensitivity means that the appraisal system is capable of distinguishing effective from ineffective performers. If it is not, then the best employees will be rated no differently from the worst employees. An appraisal system that is not sensitive to these needs cannot be used for any administrative purposes, will not help employees to develop, and will undermine the motivation of both the supervisors and the subordinates (Cascio, 1995).

Reliability would refer to the consistency of judgment used to evaluate the employee. An employee's appraisal that is made by multiple raters should be as close as possible. Raters may have different perspectives of an employee based upon their own perspectives. To provide reliable data, each rater must have an adequate opportunity to observe what the employee has done and the environment that the employee has done it under (Cascio, 1995).

Acceptability is an important requirement of an effective appraisal system. If the employee does not accept the appraisal system, it will be ineffective and not useful. The organization must put forth effort into getting front-end support and participation of all individuals who will be using the appraisal system (Cascio, 1995). If all the users of the appraisal system support and accept it, it can benefit both the organization and the employee.

Practicality implies that appraisal instruments are easy for managers and employees to understand and use all of the components. The managers must understand how to evaluate and rate their subordinates. Whether it is the rating scale or the criteria

used for evaluating employees, it must be practical and easily understood. The employee's understanding of the appraisal system will allow him to know what is expected of him and be able to improve on any weaknesses.

Developing Appraisal Criteria

Jonathan Tompkins stated: "Perhaps the most troublesome task in developing a performance appraisal instrument is the identification of appropriate appraisal criteria for specific jobs" (Tompkins, 1995, p. 253). This may be accomplished through two different methods. A task-oriented approach derives appraisal criteria from knowledge of job tasks. The first step in this approach is to develop a comprehensive list of job tasks. A shorter list is then developed to include only those tasks that are important enough to include in the appraisal instrument. These lists are usually completed by those who work in their specific fields. Jonathan Tompkins said: " The major methodological weakness of the task-oriented approach is that deriving appraisal criteria from a list of tasks involves inferential leaps that may be difficult to defend" (Tompkins, 1995, p. 254).

The second approach to developing criteria is the worker-oriented approach. In this approach, criteria is derived from behaviors that contribute to effective job performance. These behaviors are identified using a critical incident technique. Similar behaviors may be combined. Once identified, appropriate behaviors can be selected for use as appraisal criteria and measurement scales can be created around them.

Developing Performance Standards

A fair performance appraisal must have standards against which to compare

employees performance and be clearly written (Cascio, 1995). The first step in effectively managing employee or work group performance is to review existing standards and develop new ones if needed. Cascio stated: "Many supervisors simply assume that employees and work groups know what they are supposed to do on their jobs. Nothing could be further from the truth" (Cascio, 1995, p. 282). A recent study of insurance field personnel showed that as many as two-thirds of that company's employees could not clearly describe what their job requirements were and the performance standards they were evaluated on (Cascio, 1995).

Performance standards should contain two basic kinds of information. They should tell what is to be done and how well it is to be done. This will benefit both the supervisor and the employee. The identification of job tasks, duties, and critical elements help to describe what is to be done. Performance standards will focus on how well the tasks are to be done. To be most useful, each standard needs to be clearly written so everyone understands what is expected of them. Job tasks and performance standards are interrelated and should be developed at the same time.

Obstacles to Effective Performance Appraisals

Jonathan Tompkins stated: "All too often performance appraisals fail to achieve their intended purposes and leave all parties disillusioned" (Tompkins, 1995, p. 245). It is what appraisals promise and what they sometimes deliver that seem to make them ineffective. Some of these obstacles include inadequate or inappropriate rating criteria, rater bias and judgement error, insufficient organizational commitment, insufficient employee feedback, and the natural distaste people have for judging and being judged.

These obstacles may arise from the rating instrument, the rater's judgement, or the entire appraisal process itself.

For best results, performance appraisals should include appraisal criteria and performance standards that are job related and clearly defined (Tompkins, 1995). Supervisors need clear criteria to base their judgement on and to justify their ratings. It becomes hard for a supervisor to justify his ratings and the legitimacy of the system when questioned if he does not understand the appraisal criteria. Subordinates cannot be held accountable for meeting performance expectations that they are not aware of. Employees must be confident and understand the system if they are going to feel that any rewards such as merit pay are being distributed properly and fairly.

The performance appraisal itself is indeed subjective. The ratings may be influenced by other factors than the employee's performance. These may include personal bias, judgement errors, and intentional manipulations. This can result in the ratings being skewed either positively or negatively. The chance of this happening can be reduced if the appraisal criteria is specific and clearly written. Training the evaluators may also help to reduce some of this from occurring. Since appraisals require human judgement, it can never always be eliminated completely (Tompkins, 1995).

If the organization does not give full commitment to the appraisal system, it will contribute to its ineffectiveness. This commitment must include the support and commitment of the organization. This would include training the supervisors to properly understand and conduct the appraisals. Employee commitment can be increased by involving them in the design of the appraisal system.

Organizations that wish to improve, develop, and motivate their human resources must be willing to accept employee feedback on the appraisals (Tompkins, 1995). The results of the appraisals must be discussed with the employees. This discussion should take place in an appraisal review session with the employee. The supervisors must also be able to coach and counsel the employees in developing their skills.

There exists a natural resistance for people to judge others and to be judged themselves. Performing both the role of judge and coach or counselor is difficult for a supervisor to do. The act of passing judgement strains the supervisor's relationship with the employee and may inhibit motivation instead of encouraging it. Employees should be given the chance to set their own performance goals, use the appraisal to evaluate job performance instead of personality, and encourage supervisors to coach and counsel rather than criticize (Tompkins, 1995).

Conducting Appraisals

Many organizations schedule evaluations only once a year, either on the employee's anniversary date or at the start of the government's fiscal year (Walsh, 1995). The employee's performance should be discussed more than once a year. It is hard to improve an employee's performance when they are told about something they did wrong eleven months ago. By discussing the employee's performance throughout the year, they will be aware of how they are doing and what is expected of them.

It is normal for the employee's supervisor to conduct the appraisal since they work with the employee and can see their contributions to the organization. The supervisor is also most familiar with the employee's actual job performance. Some organizations have

tried different approaches to evaluating their employees.

Peers can be used to evaluate employee performance. In some cases, peers can provide a perspective on performance that is different from the immediate supervisor. Subordinates can be used to evaluate their immediate supervisor's performance. Subordinates know first hand how the supervisor delegates, their management style, and how they communicate. In smaller organizations, it is easy to determine which subordinate stated what about the supervisor. This form of appraisal requires the employee to be honest and open without being afraid of being punished for what was stated in their evaluation.

Self-appraisal is another method of evaluating performance.   This method gives the ratee a chance to become involved in the appraisal process. Since employees tend to give themselves higher marks than their supervisors, self-appraisals are more appropriate for counseling and development (Cascio, 1995). Customer evaluation of performance can be a useful tool for making employment decisions. These evaluations will not correspond completely with the organization's goals, but will show how the customer being served views the employee's performance as it relates to the service they receive.

Employee Concerns

Carter and Rausch stated: "Most employees, including fire fighters, are concerned with what their supervisors think of the quality and quantity of their work" (Carter, Rausch, 1989, p. 128). The employees want to know what they are doing with their own future while contributing to the organization. This information should be made available to the employee on a regular basis. It should also demonstrate the positive and negative

aspects.

When merit pay or pay for performance is based upon an appraisal, the employee

may be motivated to perform better. Grant and Hoover said: "Motivation can be defined as

an inner urge that prompts a person to action with a sense of purpose. Motivation

develops an attitude that makes an individual desire to be productive and do a job well"

(Grant, Hoover, 1994, p. 162). Employees who have this urge tend to have a better quality

of performance. Motivated employees will improve the function and overall operation of the

fire department. It will also result in a better service level to the citizens in the community

(Grant, Hoover, 1994). If the appraisal system can be written to where the goals and

standards are obtainable, the appraisal and merit pay have the potential to motivate the

employee to perform at a high level. Because of this performance appraisals and salary

increases are probably two of the most important motivators that are available to a

manager (Berk, Berk, 1991).

Literature Review Summary

The literature review discovered several publications in which they all stressed the

importance of conducting employee appraisals as a way to benefit both the employee's

development and the organization. The method used to create the current appraisal being

used was discussed throughout the publications. The City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and

Emergency Management appraisals were developed using employee participation and a

task oriented method. As discussed in one publication, using task oriented methods of

creating appraisal and performance standards can have negative effects. The standards

set may be at a level that makes them unattainable. This may be a problem currently being

encountered by the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management.

The literature review reinforced the importance of conducting appraisals. The literature review also provided direction with creating appraisal systems and performance standards. The current style of appraisal system being utilized was discussed and supported throughout the literature review.

PROCEDURES

A review of literature was conducted to obtain sources and information concerning employee appraisal systems. This literature was obtained from the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy. Additional resources were obtained from the local library and other relevant books relating to both the public and private sectors.

A survey (Appendix C) was distributed to fire service agencies within the same state as the City of Oviedo. The departments selected for the most part were the same size as the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management. A descriptive methodology was used in an effort to encourage the participants to speak freely about the appraisal systems they were utilizing. A total of twenty four questionnaires were distributed, with twelve being returned. The usefulness of this survey was to determine what types of appraisal systems other fire service organizations were using. It was also useful in determining if the different agencies felt their system was successful and effective. Copies of each agencies evaluation form was requested for comparison.

An informal survey was conducted with members of the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management. The purpose of this survey was to determine what the employees thought about the appraisal system as a whole. Employees were selected at

random to be surveyed.

The limitations of this survey were that it only represented fire departments in the State of Florida. No private sector information or appraisals were gathered. There were also limitations placed on the employee survey by management. This was in part due to a review of the overall appraisal system being conducted by city staff at the time of this research project. Both surveys did provide sufficient data to evaluate the current City of Oviedo appraisal system with those of other agencies.

RESULTS

Outside Agency Survey

The use of evaluations and appraisals systems to measure employee performance was perceived to be equally important to all of the fire departments that responded to the survey. Each agency had different comments on what they expected from the employee appraisal systems. The following questions were asked on the survey concerning employee appraisal systems.

1)   Does your department conduct employee appraisals/evaluations?

All twelve agencies stated that they conduct evaluations or appraisals of their employees.

2)   If evaluations/appraisals are conducted, how often are they completed?

All twelve agencies responded that they conduct their main appraisals at least a minimum of once a year. Each agency also had different time periods when an appraisal might be conducted. This was used for probationary employees, promotional employees, and employees who may have been involved with disciplinary action. These time periods ranged from three months, six months, or nine months.

3)   Does your agency have set standards or categories that the employee is evaluated on?

All twelve agencies answered yes to this question.

4)   If yes, what are these standards or categories?

Each agency was requested to enclose a copy of their current evaluation sheet. Eleven out of twelve agencies included a copy of their evaluation forms. Some of these forms are included in the appendix (Appendix D). Many of the agencies had common categories or standards for evaluating employee performance. The top five categories that were common to the different agencies are listed below.

Job Knowledge (8), Quality/Quantity of Work (5), Attendance/Punctuality (5),

Initiative (4), Following Rules and Regulations (4).

5)   Is your appraisal/evaluation system used in conjunction with a merit pay or pay for performance system?

All twelve agencies indicated that they utilize a merit pay or pay for performance system.

6)   If merit pay or pay for performance is used, how is the dollar amount given to the employee determined?

All twelve agencies stated that the merit pay is determined using the score on the appraisal/evaluation form. The amount given to the employee is either determined by the City/County government leaders or through union negotiations.

 7)   Do you feel the employee is motivated to perform at his/her highest level because of your appraisal/evaluation system and/or merit pay?

Seven agencies responded yes while five agencies responded no. Those agencies that

responded no had the following comments.

1.   Too general, no specific duties listed.

2.   Supervisors have a difficult time giving accurate scores.

3.   Employees feel high scores are unattainable.

4.   Scores given are too high in order to get more money.

5.   Not enough money is given as merit pay.

8)   What changes, if any would you like to see made to the current evaluation system being used by your department?

Two agencies said their system was okay, while ten stated that changes needed to be made. Of those ten, four agencies were currently revamping their systems, four suggested the criteria for evaluating employees be more performance specific, and two suggested that there be more training given to the evaluators.

Informal Employee Survey

The majority of the employees surveyed stated they wanted an evaluation system so they could be made aware of their individual performance and how they were doing on the job. Most felt the current system made it impossible to achieve a high score. In their opinion, this is in part due to the standards being written too high. The employees also stated that they would rather have a set salary increase each year and do away with the merit pay system. The majority replied that they are more likely to be motivated by the desire to do a good job than by the merit pay being offered.

Results Summary

The research conducted during this project provided answers to each of the original

research questions.

The first research question was to identify the different performance appraisal systems currently being used by other fire departments. The survey results showed that other fire departments are evaluating their employees on at least an annual basis using employee performance based systems.

The second research question was to identify the standards used in the appraisal systems to evaluate fire department personnel. The standards used for evaluating the employees are based on employee performance. The most common categories included job knowledge, quality/quantity of work, employee attendance/punctuality, initiative, and the employee's ability to follow rules and regulations.

The third research question dealt with other fire departments using a merit pay system in conjunction with the appraisal system and if it helped to motivate employees to perform at their highest level. All the fire departments that replied to the survey indicated they used a merit pay system. The majority of those departments felt that merit pay did motivate employees to perform better.

The fourth and final question asked if there was a better appraisal system being used by other fire departments to evaluate employee performance and motivate the employee. The research conducted did not find a better overall system to evaluate employee performance than what is currently being used by the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management. The standards used by other agencies are very similar to the ones being used by this department. There were some areas identified relating to the level the standard was written that will be discussed in the recommendation section.

DISCUSSION

The research study results and the findings of others are similar to each other. The need for an employee performance appraisal system is necessary in both the public and private sectors. The data given by the survey participants provide support for evaluating employee performance in the fire service. The current system used by the City of Oviedo uses the basic standards that are used by other departments. It also uses the basic concepts discovered in the literature review. Attempting to reward employees for their performance with merit pay is also supported through the survey results.

The author's interpretation of the study results found there is a need to evaluate employee performance. This is not only needed as a management tool, but is also needed by the employee to measure their performance and give them a sense of where they stand and what is expected of them. Employees that want to do good and perform well will do so without the incentive of merit pay. This is their personal need to perform well and be proud of the level of their work they produce. The standards being used to evaluate employee performance is consistent with those used by other agencies.

The author did interpret from the study that the standards for the City of Oviedo appraisal system may have been written too high. A task-oriented approach was used to establish the appraisal criteria by the employees when the current appraisal system was created. This was identified in the literature review as a major weakness in using this approach. This method can create an unachievable level to clearly excel in a certain

category.

Organizational implications as a result of the study were that the City of Oviedo should continue to administer employee performance appraisals. The department is following the recommended procedures for using appraisal systems. Fire department organizations have realized the importance of utilizing employee appraisals. This is a benefit both to the employee and the department as a whole. A properly written and administered appraisal system will provide a method for employees to develop and grow within the organization. This will benefit the organization by providing it with excellent employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results of the literature review indicate that the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management should continue using employee appraisals. The department is properly administering the performance appraisals. Although the performance appraisals contain the correct criteria in the standards for evaluating employee performance, the level they are written at should be reviewed. After developing them using a task-oriented approach, they may be written too high for an employee to receive an above average rating.

The findings from the surveys sent to other fire departments indicate that the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue is for the most part conducting employee appraisals in the same fashion as the other departments. The criteria chosen in the Oviedo appraisals is the same as that of the majority of the other agencies' choices.

The findings from the informal employee survey indicates the need for reviewing the

way the standards are written. It is recommended that in order to maintain the employee's faith in the appraisal system that these standards be reviewed. Those standards that have been written too high should be rewritten at an acceptable level. This level will allow an employee that performs well above the average to achieve a high rating.

It is also recommended that the City of Oviedo schedule periodic reviews of the appraisal system for it's effectiveness. This should be completed on a regular basis comparing both with the public and private sectors.

If the City of Oviedo Fire/Rescue and Emergency Management can implement these changes it will benefit both the organization and the employees. A well written and fair appraisal system will provide a good employee to the organization while motivating that employee to perform at their highest level.

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